

Discovery on Sunset Drive

by Philip Buckland



A Rich Chandler Mystery

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CHAPTER I

Beverly Nether's place was on Sunset Drive in Bellingham, Washington. It was a nice white one story house with a blue roof and a matching garage attached to the house.

Beverly, the owner and manager of the Nether Corporation, was at her place now. Sitting inside her big cream white living room, and noticed she was out of cashews. So she got off the big champagne colored couch she had been sitting on and went into the kitchen so she could get more cashews and then go back into the living room and feed Pax. Beverly was tall, plump, tanned, had long, thick platinum blonde hair, light green eyes, a stern face, and she was wearing a long sleeve black turtle neck sweater and a

cream white tight fitting skirt and cream white high heel shoes.

Beverly was in the kitchen now, and she got another package of cashews out of the cupboard and went back into the living room and took a cashew out of the package so she could toss it to Pax, and then Pax would catch it and eat it.

Pax was standing on the couch. He was a beautiful blue and gold Maccaw parrot. "Brakkk . . . " he said. "Pax want a nut. Pax want a nut."

"I'll give you a nut," Beverly said. Then she tossed the cashew at Pax, and then Pax caught the cashew and ate it. Beverly returned to the couch and sat down on it and resumed watching TV and looked at her platinum plated wrist watch. Six fifty seven.

She had to keep track of time. Tonight her two sisters--Heather and Ilene Garth--were going to show up, and then she and Heather and Ilene were going to go out to

eat, and then they were going to go see a movie. Beverly fed Pax more cashews.

Heather and Ilene were going over to Beverly's place now.

When they arrived here at Beverly's place, they pulled up in front of her place, and then Heather brought her matte brown van to a complete stop. Although she didn't park the car. Instead, she honked her horn to tell Beverly that she and Ilene were here. But they didn't see Beverly come out of the house to join them. So Heather honked her horn again. But again, Beverly didn't come out of her house. Then Heather honked her horn again, but again, Beverly didn't come out of her house. Heather and Ilene wondered about this. Then Heather parked her car, and then she withdrew the keys from the ignition and put her keys into her shiny beige shoulder strap handbag and collected her purse, and Ilene collected her shiny dark blue shoulder strap handbag, and then both Heather and Ilene got out of the

van and walked up to the front door of Beverly's place to knock on it. Heather was as tall and plump as Beverly, and she, too, had long, thick platinum blonde hair, but her eyes were blue, and she was wearing specs over her eyes, but her face wasn't as stern as Beverly's, and she was wearing a brown turtle neck sweater and gray pants and black tennis shoes, and Ilene was as tall and plump as both Beverly and Heather, and she, too, had long thick platinum blonde hair, but her eyes were brown, and she wasn't wearing glasses, and *her* face looked somewhat stern, and she was wearing a long sleeve blue blouse and a brown skirt and flesh tone stockings and shiny black high heel shoes.

When Heather and Ilene reached the front door of Beverly's house, one of them knocked on it. No answer. One of she knocked again. Again, no answer. Then she knocked on the door again. But again, there was no answer. They wondered why Beverly

didn't answer the door. Then they walked into Beverly's place to find out why Beverly hadn't answered the door, and why Beverly hadn't gone out to Heather's van to join Heather and Ilene for dinner and a movie. Then, they stopped suddenly--and then their eyes and mouth widened--and then they screamed.

Beverly was lying on the couch. There was a bullet hole in her forehead. Blood was seeping out of the bullet hole. Pax was lying on the couch, too. Blood was seeping out of the bullet hole in his chest.

CHAPTER II

Patrol Insurance was on Holly Street in Bellingham.

I was here at Patrol now. Walking down the hall to go to my boss's office. Marla Hoyt, John Thatcher's secretary, had called me and told me that John, the head of Investigations for Patrol, and my boss, needed to see me. Me? I'm Rich Chandler. I'm an investigator for Patrol. Working for the Investigations Division of Patrol. Now I reached John's office and went into it.

Marla was sitting behind her console and penning her way through some paperwork when her phone rang. She picked up the receiver and said, "Investigations." Then she started talking to whoever it was that was on the other end of the phone. Then she

replaced the receiver and saw me and spoke to me: "Good morning, Rich,"

"Good morning, Marla," *I* said. "Well, what is it *this* time? Did someone walk into a room, and then the walls of the room closed in on the guy?"

"No. This time it's a double murder."

"A double murder?"

"That's right," Then Marla picked up the receiver of her phone and told John I was here. Then she replaced the receiver and told me I can go on in. I did.

John was sitting behind his big, long cedar desk here inside his big, wide off-white office and talking to someone on the phone. Then he finished talking to that person and replaced the receiver of his phone.

"Marla told me that it's double murder this time," I then said to John.

"That's right," John confirmed. It is. Sit down and I'll tell you about it."

I sat down in one of the comfortable leather armchairs that matched the color of John's desk.

John took a photograph out of a file and gave it to me and told me who was in the photograph: "Beverly Nether. She was the owner and manager of the Nether Corporation. Worth several million dollars. She had a couple of life insurance policies. One million dollars apiece. Her beneficiaries are her two sisters--Heather and Ilene Garth. She also had life insurance policies on the people who work at the Nether Corporation, and accident and fire and business and embezzlement insurance policies on the building and the equipment the operations of the Nether Corporation are in, and she also has policies on the industries that she owned and managed, too, as well as she was the owner and manager of the Nether Corporation; life, accident, fire, and the businesses that those industries have, and embezzlement, and she also had insurance

on her house and car. And she also had insurance on her pet parrot. His name was Pax."

"A parrot?" I wondered.

"That's right. Five hundred dollars a piece. Payable to both Heather and Ilene Garth in case they'd like to buy a new parrot. Or if one of them would like to buy a new parrot. They liked Pax as much as Beverly did." Then John took another photograph out of the file and gave it to me and looked at it. Then I whistled. "Beautiful bird," I then said.

"Yes, it was."

"Was?"

"That's right. Was. The parrot's dead. So is Beverly Nether," Then John told me how and when and where Beverly and Pax had been killed and who had seen the bodies. Then John told me that Heather and Ilene had called the police and Patrol after they had seen the bodies. "Beverly and Heather and Ilene were going to go out and have

dinner and see a movie at that time," John continued "Heather and Ilene had gone over to Beverly's place to pick her up, and then they noticed Beverly and Pax dead on the couch in the living room. The police and our company examined the scene of the crime. We only found Beverly Nether's blood and Pax's blood. No one else's blood was at the scene of the crime. Both Beverly and Pax were killed with a gun. A pistol most likely. No one saw or heard what was going on."

"Probably because the killer had a silencer on his gun, and no one saw or heard him escape after he killed Beverly and Pax."

"The only fingerprints we found inside Beverly's house were hers and Heather's and Ilene's. Beverly's fingerprints were all over the place, and Heather's fingerprints were on the knob outside the front door of Beverly's place."

"Which means that the killer must have worn gloves."

"It doesn't look like any other crime was committed at that place."

"Which means that whoever killed Beverly and Pax did just that: he killed both Beverly and Pax. He didn't commit any other crime there. Which means that he killed Beverly for some reason, and he killed Pax to keep Pax from repeating whatever it was he heard that has to do with his killing Beverly. Since parrots repeat what they hear. Or, maybe he was going to commit some other crime there, but he didn't because Beverly and Pax surprised him. And because of this, he killed them and ran."

"Of course. And, of course, we've got to conduct a full investigation of this double murder before we pay off as well as help the police find out who killed Beverly and Pax and why."

"Of course."

Then John told me to give back to him the picture of Beverly and the picture of Pax and I did, and then John put both pictures

back into the file he had taken the pictures out of and gave the file to me and spoke to me again: "Here's the file on Beverly," Then he gave me another file and spoke to me again: "And here's the file on the investigation of Beverly's murder and Pax's murder so far." I took *that* file and looked through it. Then I spoke to John: "Anything else?"

"No. I think that's it. Good luck, Rich,"

"Thanks, John," Then I left John's office.

I was inside the outer office now. I spoke to Marla: "Well. The murder of a woman and her parrot. This should be interesting."

"Yes, it should be," Marla said.

"See ya later."

"See ya later, Rich. And good luck."

"Thanks," Then I left John's office so I could go back to *my* office and read the files on the Beverly Nether and Pax case before I conduct my investigation of the double murder.

CHAPTER III

I was here inside my office now. Which was on the same floor John's office was on. And sitting behind my desk and reading the first file on Beverly. Which was the one about her having her insurance with us. The one thing in the file that John hadn't told me about that *was* in the file that Beverly had been married to Harold Nether. Harold had been the owner and the manager of the Nether Corporation before he had died of a heart attack one day, and then Beverly had been promoted to owner and manager of the Nether Corporation. Before Harold had died, Beverly had been the assistant manager of the Nether Corporation. I also looked at the photograph of Harold. He looked young and old, with light brown hair, dark green eyes,

rather handsome coarse, smooth features. I turned the photograph over to read what was on the back of the photograph: Harold's physical description; he had been five feet eleven, a hundred and eighty pounds. Then I turned the photograph over and continued reading the file. Everything else in the file I was reading right now was everything else that John had told me about that had to do with Beverly was about what it was that Patrol was insuring. After I read *that* file, I put the photograph of Harold Nether back into the file, and then I read the file on the investigation of Beverly's murder and Pax's murder so far. Some of the file did tell me what John had told me about the investigation of the murders of Beverly and Pax. Then there was some other information in the file that told me about the interview the police and Patrol had had with Heather and Ilene about the double murder that John hadn't told me about: it told me that Heather and Ilene had said it looked like

both Beverly and Pax had been murdered and no other crime had been committed at Beverly's place. The reason they thought that was because of something that had happened at Tech, a place that specialized in manufacturing electric items and custom made electric items and repairing electric items, and one of the industries that Harold and Beverly had owned. A new man went to work at Tech as a designer. His name was Eli Ramsey. Nadine Fuller, one of the girls who worked in the office at Tech as the personnel assistant, had gotten interested in him. There was nothing wrong about that until one day she had been fired for harassing Eli. But she had said she had never harassed him. But no one saw or heard from her since then. Beverly had found out about this and wondered about this and tried to look into it. She hadn't believed what she had found out. But she couldn't find out why Nadine had been fired for harassing Eli. And then someone must have killed Beverly, or had

her killed, to keep her from looking into Nadine's being fired for harassing Eli. If this were the case, then that meant that someone didn't want Beverly or Nadine or someone else to know about Eli. Or why Eli was working at Tech. Or both. Heather and Ilene had also told the police and Patrol that after Beverly had heard about Nadine being fired for harassing Eli and had tried to find out about Nadine's being fired for harassing Eli, and before Beverly and Pax were killed, Beverly had told Heather and Ilene that she was going to hire a private investigator to find out why Nadine had been fired for harassing Eli. They had even told the police and Patrol the name of that private investigator: Dave Atherton. But there was no report of Atherton's looking into the harassment charge. Which meant that Atherton hadn't taken the case, or he had, but he was working undercover on it, but he had nothing to report on it right now, or it was something else.

The report also told me that the police and Patrol had informed the people at the Nether Corporation and Tech that Beverly and Pax were dead and asked them questions about Beverly's murder and Pax's murder, but they hadn't told them about the theory that Heather and Ilene had about why someone wanted Beverly and Pax dead. The reason why they hadn't told them about the theory was because it was just that: a theory. There was no evidence that said Beverly and Pax had been murdered for that reason. But the police and Patrol thought it best to look in to the theory. Maybe Beverly and Pax had been murdered for that reason. There was that possibility because Beverly and Pax had been murdered shortly after Beverly had heard that Nadine had been fired for harassing this Eli. But they were going to have look into this theory secretly, go undercover. If they look into the theory publicly, the murderer would run, and then the police wouldn't be able to catch him and

they wouldn't be able to find out why the murderer had killed Beverly and Pax.

The report said who in the police department was working undercover on this investigation right now, and what they had discovered so far. But the report didn't say who in Patrol was working with the police on the undercover investigation. Which meant that that person hadn't gotten on the job yet. And I had the feeling that the person who was going to get on the job was me. Although John hadn't told me that when he had told me about Beverly's murder and Pax's murder. But that would give me time to come up with a way to look into this theory secretly with the police. And the I look into that theory secretly that way.

Also in the report was the background on Nadine. It said that she had lived in Fremont, Michigan for a few years and then she had moved here to Bellingham and had gone to work at some other places here in Bellingham before she had gone to work at

Tech in the office. I also looked at Nadine's photograph. She had red hair, blue eyes, a triangular face, and a creamy pallor complexion. I turned the photograph over to read the rest of Nadine's physical description: she was also five feet ten inches and a hundred and twenty pounds. I put the photograph back into the file.

I was reading the background on Atherton now. I had finished reading the background on Nadine. The background on Atherton told me Atherton had lived in Moscow, Idaho for a few years. At that time he had been an operative for a detective agency in Moscow, and then he gone into business for himself as a private investigator and had opened up his own office in Moscow, and then he had moved here to Bellingham and had opened up his own office here in Bellingham. And he had been living here in Bellingham ever since then, and he was still living here in Bellingham, and he was still working as a private

investigator. I looked at the photograph of Atherton. His hair was blond. His eyes were blue. He wasn't handsome, but he wasn't unhandsome, either. I turned the photograph over to read the rest of Atherton's physical description: he was a hundred and fifty pounds and five feet ten inches.

I finished reading the background on Atherton. Now I opened the file on the background on Eli to read that. Then I saw Eli's picture. I took it out of the file to look at it. Eli was pale, had black hair, blue eyes, and a dimply face. I turned the photograph over to read the rest of Eli's physical description; he was six feet even, a hundred and sixty pounds. Then I turned the picture back over and put it on my desk and read the background on Eli. It said that he had moved here to Bellingham a few days ago and had gone to work at Tech as a designer. The report also told me that Eli had a degree in electronics. It also told me that before Eli

had moved here to Bellingham, he had lived in Las Vegas, Nevada most of his life. But there was no other information on his background. Then I discovered something else: the background check only went back six years. There was no other information on him before those six years. I found this interesting. I was going to have to look into this as well as help the police look into the theory that Heather and Ilene had about why Beverly and Pax had been murdered.

CHAPTER IV

I was driving away from Eli's place now. I had worked out my plan on how I was going to do *my* part in working with the police on looking into the theory that Heather and Ilene had about why Beverly and Pax had been murdered. Then I had gone over to Eli's place to search that. I had wanted to do that before I do the other things in doing my part in working with the police on looking into the theory that Heather and Ilene had about why Beverly and Pax. Then I had arrived at Eli's place and staked out his place so I could see when he was going to leave his place and go to work, and then I could get into his place and search it and bug it and tap his landline phone, and then I had seen him leave his place and get into his car and leave

his place. Then I had snuck into his place and had searched it and bugged it and tapped his landline phone. Now I took my digital recorder out of my pocket and recorded what I had discovered at Eli's place: nothing. Which meant that he had nothing to hide, or he had something to hide, but he was hiding it somewhere else.

I was putting my digital recorder back into my pocket because I had finished recording my report on what I had discovered at Eli's place when I saw something in the rear view mirror of my car: something following me. He was staying far behind me, though, but I could still see him. It was like looking at a pebble. Although I could see the color of the car he was driving: it was orange. But I couldn't see what make or model of the car it was. I wondered about this. The person following me must have been following me, or started following me, after I had searched and had left Eli's place. Eli himself wasn't following me. I had found

out what kind of car *he* drove: a maroon Chrysler. So whoever it was that was following me must have something to do with my helping the police look into the theory that Heather and Ilene had about why Beverly and Pax had been murdered. It couldn't be anything else. I hadn't seen or heard from the person following me before that about anything else. I was going to have find out why this person was following me. I put my digital recorder back into my pocket, and when I got to the first cross street, I turned onto it and drove down it. The person following me saw me turned onto that street and drove down the street and passed me. Me? I had pulled up to the curb and had parked here and had taken out my digital recorder. Then I saw the person driving by me, and then I looked at the license plate number of the car and noticed what kind of car the person was driving and recorded everything I saw. Then I put my digital recorder back into my pocket, and

then I started up *my* car and pulled away from the curb and into the street and drove down the street so I could follow the person who was following me. Although I stayed as far behind him as I could so I wouldn't let him see me following him. Then I got out my cell phone and called Patrol and told the operator to put me in touch with Investigations. She did.

"Good morning," Marla said. "Patrol Insurance. Investigations Division. Marla Hoyt speaking."

"Marla," *I* said. "It's Rich."

"Rich. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"Someone's following me. And he's been following me ever since I left Eli Ramsey's place after I searched it. I need to know who this person is." Then I told Marla what kind of car the person was driving and what color the car was and the license plate number of the car.

"I'll get back to you," Marla told me. Then she hung up.

So did I. Then I put my cell phone back into my pocket and continued noticing what the person who was following me was doing. He was looking forward and around him. Probably to find out where I was now.

My cell phone rang. I took it out of my pocket and said hello.

"Hello. Rich?"

"Yeah?"

"It's Marla. I found out who it is that's following you: her name is Ruth Hayward. She's an operative for the Del Gaunt Detective Agency."

"She's a private investigator?"

"That's right."

"Now we find out why she's following me. Do you have her cell phone number?"

"Yes, I do," Then she told me what Ruth Hayward's cell phone number was.

"I'll get back to you." Then I hung up, and then I dialed Ruth's cell phone number.

"Hello?"

"Hello," *I* said. "Ms Ruth Hayward?"

"Yes. This is Ruth Hayward."

"Ms Hayward, this is the person you're following. I'm following *you* right now."

Then I saw Ruth look behind her. She saw me. I waved at her. She didn't wave back.

"If you're following me," I said. "then you must want to know what I'm doing. You must have already found out who *I* am."

"Yes, I have. Your name is Rich Chandler, and you're an investigator for Patrol Insurance."

"That's right. I think we should get together and tell each other what we're doing. It would save us the job of following each other to find out what we're doing."

"All right."

"May I recommend we go somewhere and talk."

"All right."

Then I recommended a good place where we could talk at. Then we hung up, and then I called Marla and told her about the cell phone conversation I had just had with Ruth.

The Best Western Plus Lakeway Inn was on Lakeway Drive. I had eaten here before. It was one of my favorite places to eat at.

I pulled up in front of the hotel and parked my car here, and then I got here out of the car and locked it, and then I saw the orange Mazda pull up to the hotel and next to *my* car and come to a complete stop. Then I saw Ruth park her car in front of the hotel. Then I saw her get out of her car and lock it.

"Ruth Hayward?" I said to her.

"Yes?" Ruth said.

"I'm Rich Chandler." Then I took my Patrol Insurance investigator ID out of my pocket and showed it to her, and then Ruth took her Del Gaunt Detective Agency private investigator's ID out of her shineless light brown shoulder strap handbag which was

resting on her right shoulder and showed it to me. Then I put my Patrol insurance investigator ID back into my pocket, and Ruth put her Del Gaunt Detective Agency private investigator's ID back into her purse, and then the both of us shook hands. Ruth's grip was pleasant but firm.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Chandler," Ruth said to me.

"I'm glad to know you, Ms Hayward," I said to Ruth.

Ruth was tall, slender, had long, thick sandy hair, clear light green eyes, a creamy tan complexion, full, dark pink lips, and she was wearing a long sleeve black coat and a light green blouse and orange pants and shiny white high heel shoes.

We were sitting inside the coffee shop of the hotel now. Sipping coffee.

"When I saw you run out of Eli Ramsey's place and get into your car and drive away," Ruth told me. "I decided to find out who you are and why you were at Ramsey's place

before I search Ramsey's place. That's why I followed you. I thought what I saw you do at Ramsey's place might have to do with the case I'm working on."

"I take it what you're working on has to do with Ramsey?" I asked Ruth.

"Yes, it does. Don Burke, a chemist and a property owner, wanted to buy this property. It's out in the country, and he likes to work and live out in the country. Then he called up the real estate agency that was selling the property and told the real estate agent who was selling the property he wanted to buy the property and why, but the agent told him that someone else had already bought the property: a chemical company called the Alchemy Corps. But Mr. Burke told the real estate agent he never heard of the Alchemy Corps, and then the real estate agent told Mr. Burke that the Alchemy Corps was a chemical company that used to operate out in the east. And then it moved here to Bellingham. Said they wanted to operate out

here in the Great Northwest. And then, after Mr Burke and the real estate agent finished talking, and out of curiosity, Mr. Burke tried to find out about the Alchemy Corps, but he couldn't find out about the Alchemy Corps. It was like the company never existed. And then one night at a party, Mr. Burke was talking to some friends of his about the property he wanted to buy and why he wanted to buy the property and what he found out about the Alchemy Corps, and then some of his friends told him they drive by the property whenever they go to and from work, but they didn't see anyone on the property. And there wasn't even any kind of activity going on on the property. All they saw was a sign on the property saying the property had been sold, but that was all. Mr. Burke wondered about this and told the police about it. The police looked into it. But they couldn't find out what was going on on the property. They even talked to the real estate agent who sold the property to the

Alchemy Corps, but he told them the same thing he told Mr. Burke: that a chemical company called the Alchemy Corps bought the property because they wanted to operate out here in the Great Northwest. They had operated out in the east. Then the police came to the conclusion that the Alchemy Corps hadn't taken possession of the property yet, but they will. And the police told Mr. Burke about this conclusion. The police even drove by the place to see what was going on, but they couldn't find anything going on the place. They even staked out the place. Nothing happened. Then they discontinued the investigation. Because nothing happened at the place and they continue looking into this for who knows how long. Then Mr. Burke told us about the situation. Then we realized that maybe something *is* going on at the place, and so we told Mr. Burke we'll look into it. And then I drove by the place, and then at night, I saw something happening at the

place: a helicopter landed inside the place, and then someone got out of the helicopter and met these other two people at the place. Then I photographed all of these people and the helicopter, and then I saw these people get into this car and leave the place, and I also saw the helicopter leave the place, going back in the same direction it came from, and then I followed the car these people were in and called Del and told him what I saw and what I was doing and the license plate number of the car these people were in and what these people look like, and then Del ran a check on these people and the car they were in and the helicopter and found out who these three people are: Liam Winslow, the same real estate agent that Mr. Burke talked about the property that Alchemy Corps now owns, and Wayde Cambridge, car manufacturer, and Ramsey. Winslow and Cambridge live here in Bellingham. The car belongs to Winslow. We're still trying to find out about the helicopter. Then I saw all

three people go over to Ramsey's place, and when I saw them get to Ramsey's place, I saw Ramsey get out of the car and go into his place. Then I saw Winslow and Cambridge leave Ramsey's place. They I staked out Ramsey's place."

"I see."

"And Winslow must have gone over to that property with Wayde Cambridge so that he and Cambridge would meet Ramsey at that property. Ramsey was the one who stepped out of the helicopter after the helicopter brought him to that place. And Cambridge and Winslow must have met Ramsey at that place at night. Which means that Cambridge and Winslow and Ramsey didn't want to be seen meeting at that place. That would explain their meeting at that place at night."

"Yes, it would."

"And if Winslow had been the one who told Mr. Burke and the police why the Alchemy Corps hadn't taken possession their

property yet, but they were going to, then that would mean it was Winslow who tipped off the other people who were working with him on using that property because the police were looking into what was going on at the property. That would explain no activity at the property. And then, somehow, Winslow found out the police stopped looking into what was going on at the property and called off the investigation. Then Winslow and the other people he was working with on whatever they're doing at the property continued doing whatever it is they're doing at the property."

"Yeah. And if Cambridge went and met Ramsey out at that property with Winslow, then that would mean that Cambridge is in on whatever it is that Winslow and those other people are doing at that property--so are Ramsey and the helicopter pilot who brought Ramsey to that place."

"Of course."

"When I continued staking out Ramsey's place and continued talking to Del about what he found out about Winslow and Cambridge, Del also told me what he found out about Ramsey." Then Ruth told me what Del had found out about Ramsey, and it was the same as what *I* had found out about Ramsey when John had given me the Nether murder case and I told her that, and I also told her that I had found out what I had found out about Ramsey in the course of *my* investigation. Then I told Ruth what *my* assignment was and what else I had discovered in the course of *my* investigation.

"I see," Ruth said after I had finished. "Well, it looks like we just started our assignments. The other things we're going to do today is try to sneak into that property Winslow and Cambridge and Ramsey and those other people are using and find out what's going on there and bug the place and tap whatever phones are there, and we're already putting Winslow and Cambridge and

Ramsey under twenty four hour surveillance. One of my colleagues relieved me last night on staking out Ramsey's place."

"When you *were* at Ramsey's place staking it out, what did you find there?"

"Nothing. Ramsey stayed up a while longer after Winslow and Cambridge took him to his place, and then it looked like he went to bed. The light inside was distinguished later on. This morning, my relief called me and told me Ramsey left his place so he could go to work, and so I drove over to his place so I could search it. That's when I saw *you* there and did what I wanted to do when I saw you leaving the place."

"Uh-huh. Well, I can save you the job of searching the place. *I* searched it. I found nothing there."

"Which means that Ramsey's got nothing to hide, or he has, but he's hiding it somewhere else."

"Yeah. It has to be one or the other. What *I* need to do next is investigate Nadine

Fuller as well as investigate Ramsey. And find that private investigator, Dave Atherton, and talk to him. Maybe *he* found out something. I'll also need to know how he's looking into Nadine Fuller being fired from her job because she was accused of harassing Ramsey. If he's working undercover on this, then I don't want to expose him and jeopardize his mission."

"Of course. Maybe we can work together on our assignments."

"I think that that would be a good idea."

"First we should call our bosses and tell them what we talked about."

"Yeah. And after we do that we can work out our next plan of action."

"Agreed," Then Ruth took her cell phone out of her purse and called Del at work and told Del everything that she and I had just talked about, and *I* took *my* cell phone out of my pocket and called John at work and told *him* everything that Ruth and I had just talked about.

CHAPTER V

A few hours later, I was here at the Five Columns, a Greek and Italian restaurant here on Samish Way. I had eaten here before. It was one of my favorite places to eat at. After Ruth and I had talked about what we were going to do next in our respective assignments, we had had lunch and had decided what we could do today: which was Ruth could go see Atherton about the Nether murder case, and I could investigate what I can about Nadine Fuller today. Then we had decided where we could meet and compare notes. After that, I paid our checks, and then we left the Best Western and split up to carry out our individual assignments. Now I was sitting at a booth and sipping coffee and looking out the window to watch

for Ruth. Then I saw her pull up to the restaurant and park her car next to the restaurant and come into the restaurant. Then she saw me, and then we waved at each other, and then Ruth came over to my table and sat down at it. Then we ordered some drinks and dinner. Now both of us were drinking red wine and waiting for our dinners.

"I went over to Atherton's office to talk to him about the Nether murder case," Ruth told me. I had given her the information I had on Atherton so she could use it. "but he wasn't there. Then I searched his office. Nothing there about the Nether murder case. Which means he hasn't anything to report to his client, or he just got started on his assignment. I looked for his car so I could search that. Not there. Then I went over to his place to see if he were there so I could talk to him about the Nether murder case. But he wasn't there. Then I searched his place. Nothing. Which means that he must

doing all of his private detective work at his office. He doesn't like doing his private detective work at home. Then I looked for his car. Not there. Which means that he must have gone somewhere. He might still be working on what Beverly Nether hired him to do. Or, it may be something else."

"Yeah. *I* went over to Nadine Fuller's place to talk to her about why she was fired for hassling Eli Ramsey. But she wasn't there. I also searched her place. Nothing. I also checked to see if her car were there. It wasn't. Which that she must have gone somewhere. I also asked around to find out where Nadine went to, but no one knows where she went or when she's coming back." I had gotten information on what kind of car Nadine drove from John when I had called John and had told him what Ruth and I had talked about at the Best Western, and he had given me the information on Nadine's car.

"Del called me and told me that some of our people were able to sneak into that place that the Alchemy Corps bought to look around there and they did, but they didn't find anything there. The whole place is unoccupied."

"Well, that explains it. They bought that place so no one else can use it, and let people know that they bought the place so those people can't use it, and then they do what they're doing at that place. But only when it's dark out. Like that time that helicopter landed inside the place and Ramsey got off of the copter and met Winslow and Cambridge at that place, and then the helicopter left, probably going back in the same direction it came from, and Winslow and Cambridge took Ramsey to Ramsey's place here in Bellingham and told him what kind of car he's driving now and gave him the keys to the car. Then Winslow and Cambridge left, and Ramsey went into his place. Which means that Ramsey must

have been brought here to Bellingham to live here and do something here in Bellingham."

"Yeah. Or it's something else."

"That's right. It's one or the other. Or, maybe he's already doing it. Whatever it is."

"But if he's already doing it, then what could it be that he's already doing here in Bellingham?"

"We'll have to find that out. And we'll also have to find out what he'll do here in Bellingham. It's obvious that he's already doing something here in Bellingham, or, he's going to do something here in Bellingham."

"We were able to find out where that helicopter came from and who pilots it: the helicopter came from Las Vegas, Nevada, and the pilot is Ben Able. He runs a helicopter service there in Las Vegas. We've got our man in Las Vegas putting Able under twenty four hour surveillance right now. But there's nothing on him to report right now. He hasn't done anything unusual right now."

"But, of course, that doesn't mean he won't. But if Able delivered Ramsey here to Bellingham from Las Vegas, then he must be in on whatever it is that Ramsey's going to do here in Bellingham, or he's already doing it in Bellingham. And he may know Winslow and Cambridge, too, and be in on what they're doing, also."

"Yeah. We're still putting Ramsey and Cambridge and Winslow under twenty four hour surveillance. Nothing on them to report right now. They still haven't done anything unusual. And we're doing a drive by surveillance on the place that Winslow and Cambridge and those other people bought instead of staking it out. If we stake it out, Winslow and Cambridge and those other people who bought that property and Ramsey will notice the stake out and stop doing what they're doing there and move the operation to some other place."

"Of course. I think what we should do now is go to Las Vegas and continue the

investigation there. Maybe the answer's there in Las Vegas."

"I agree."

"And we should also stake out Nadine Fuller's place. Sooner or later she'll go back there, and when she does, we can talk to her. And we should also stake out Atherton's home and office so we can wait for him and talk to him."

"Of course."

Then Ruth took her cell phone out of her purse and called Del at work and told him what she and I should do next, and that we should also stake out Nadine Fuller's place so we can wait for her to show up and then we can talk to her, and stake out Atherton's home and office so we can wait for him to show up and then we can talk to him, and *I* took *my* cell phone out of my pocket and called John at work and told *him* what Ruth and I should do next and that we should stake out Nadine Fuller's place so we can wait for her to show up and then we can talk

to her, and stake out Atherton's home and office so we can wait for him to show up and then we can talk to *him*.

CHAPTER VI

As the plane was reaching Las Vegas, I looked out the porthole. Las Vegas looked like a palace that went on for miles. I had heard about Las Vegas from other Patrol Insurance co-workers and other people who didn't work for Patrol Insurance who had gone to Las Vegas. Some of them had gone there on business, but they had managed to have pleasure there while they had conducted their businesses there. The others who had gone to Las Vegas had gone there for pleasure. Both the Patrol Insurance co-workers, and the other people who didn't work for Patrol Insurance, had told me what they had done in Las Vegas, and how much they liked what they had done in Las Vegas, and because of this, I decided that if I can

put in some quality recreational time while I'm in Vegas and carry out my assignment in Las Vegas, I will. And find out if Ruth would like to put in some quality recreational time while *she's* in Las Vegas and carries out her assignment in Las Vegas, too.

The plane came down on the runway of the airport here in Las Vegas so smoothly, the plane jostling could hardly be felt. The plane came to a complete stop at the terminal, and then Ruth and the other passengers and I collected our luggage and walked out of the plane and down the ramp and towards the terminal.

As Ruth and I entered the terminal the loud-speaker said: "Mr. Rich Chandler, and Ms Ruth Hayward. Please go to the Golden Airways counter. Mr. Rich Chandler, and Ms Ruth Hayward. Please go to the Golden Airways counter. Mr. Rich Chandler, and Ms Ruth Hayward . . . "

Ruth and I looked around for the Golden Airways counter, and then we found it, and then we walked over to it.

A man was standing at the Golden Airways counter. He wasn't very tall, slender, pale, had black hair, dark green eyes, a rough, smooth face, and he was wearing a grayish suit and a white shirt, no tie, open collar, and black leather shoes, and he was holding the handle of a black brief case in his left hand.

When Ruth and I reached the Golden Airways counter, the man smiled at us.

"Hello," he said to us. "Mr. Rich Chandler? And Ms Ruth Hayward?"

Ruth said she was Ruth Hayward, and *I* said *I* was Rich Chandler.

"I'm Tom McIntire. I'm the head of the Las Vegas office of the Del Gaunt Agency."

Then Ruth and I shook hands with Tom. Tom's grip was hard.

"Del told me the both of you were coming here to Vegas to resume your

respective investigations," Tom told Ruth and me. "He told me what the two of you are looking into and what the two of you have discovered so far and why the two of you came here to Vegas. I'm to help the both of you any way I can on your investigations. Have the two of you had lunch."

"No, I haven't," I told him.

"No, I haven't," Ruth told him.

"Well, then, we'll have lunch, and then the two of you can get situated and get your rental cars, and then we'll get started on your investigations."

"Fine," I said.

"That's fine," Ruth said.

The three of us were here at Don Alejandro's Texan Grill now. We had already ordered lunch. Now the three of us were having coffee while we waited for our lunches to come.

"I was told that you knew that we put Ben Able under twenty four hour surveillance after we found out where that

helicopter came from," Tom told Ruth and me. "Well, we were also able to sneak inside his place and search it and bug it and tap his landline phone. Our search of his place revealed nothing. Which means that he's got nothing to hide, or he is hiding something, but he's hiding somewhere else. No phone calls have been made or taken on his landline phone having to do with what the two of you are investigating. Which means that Able and whoever it is that he's talking to on the phone that has to do with what the two of you are looking into are being careful what to say on that phone. Or maybe they're using another phone to have that kind of conversation. Maybe pay phones."

"Of course," I said.

"We're also staking out Able's place. And we're staking out his place of business, too. What we haven't done yet is get inside his place of business and search it and bug it and tap the landline phone there; something else happened here in Vegas that we found

out a few days before we found out about the helicopter that we found interesting; and we heard about it on TV, too: a hit man named Abe Drury was captured and taken to trial and found guilty of murder. After that he was being taken to prison, but on his way to prison, some people appeared and stopped the bus that was taking Drury to prison by firing a shot into one of the tires. And then these people rendered the driver and the other police officers on the bus unconscious with tranquilizing pistols. Then they freed Drury and took him with them and disappeared. The driver of the bus and the police officers on the bus weren't able to recognize the people who rendered them unconscious and shot out one of the tires of the bus and freed Drury and took him with them and disappeared. They wore hoods."

"Well, that's very interesting," Ruth said.

"Yeah," *I* said. "That *is* interesting. This man Drury disappears here in Vegas, and

then, a few days later, Eli Ramsey appears in Bellingham."

"Yes. It *is* interesting," Tom said. "And we'll be looking into this. To find out if it has to do with what the two of you are looking into, or, if it has to do with something else."

"Of course. Have any idea where this Drury disappeared to?"

"No. Not right now. But we'll be looking into that, too." Then Tom opened up his brief case and took a photograph out of the brief case and showed it to Ruth and me and told us Drury was in this photograph. Ruth and I looked at the photograph. Drury had light brown hair, dark blue eyes, and bland features. I asked Tom to turn the photograph over so I could read what was on the back of the photograph and he turned the photograph over. And I read what was on the back of the photograph: the rest of Drury's physical description: he was five feet ten, and a hundred and fifty pounds.

"I take it the police are still looking for Drury?" I asked Tom.

"Yes, they are," Tom answered. "But if they are still looking for Drury, then the people who got Drury off of the bus going to prison and took Drury with them must have put him in hiding. And wherever it is they're hiding him in must be a very good hiding place--if Drury is still here in Vegas. Or, they smuggled Drury out of Vegas and into some other place."

"Of course. But I say that whatever it is that's going on must have started here in Vegas, and it must be ending or continuing in Bellingham--if Drury's disappearance here in Vegas, and Eli Ramsey's appearance in Bellingham, are connected. It would explain everything that has happened up to now."

"Yes, it would," Tom thought about that.

"Yes, it would," Ruth thought about that, too.

"Yes. It would," *I* said.

"And Nadine Fuller could have found out about it if she hadn't been fired from her job because of her being accused of harassing Eli Ramsey," Ruth said.

"That's right," I confirmed. "Someone must have found out that Nadine was getting interested in Ramsey, and eventually, she'd find out why he's in Bellingham. Then they framed her for harassing Ramsey and fired her because of her harassing Ramsey, and then they kidnapped her and took her and her car somewhere to make it look like Nadine went somewhere, but no one knows where she went to or when she's coming back. Then they killed her as an added precaution."

"Yeah. And then there's Beverly Nether: she must have been murdered because *she* could have found out why Ramsey's in Bellingham after she found out why Nadine was fired from her job. And since Beverly Nether was murdered at her place, the murderer murdered the parrot as an added

precaution as well as he murdered Beverly Nether. The parrot might not have been able to talk, but that doesn't mean he couldn't repeat what he heard--if he heard something."

"Yeah," Tom confirmed. "And then there this David Atherton I had been told about: no one knows where *he* is right now or what *he's* doing right now. Although we know that Beverly Nether hired him to look into Nadine Fuller's being fired from her job before Beverly Nether was killed. Which means that he must be working undercover on his looking into Nadine Fuller's being fired from her job, but he hasn't found out anything right now--or maybe *he* was killed, too. By the same person who found out about Nadine's interest in Ramsey and kept her from being more interested in him, and killed Beverly Nether or had Beverly Nether killed to keep her from looking into why Nadine Fuller was fired from her job. And then that person took Atherton and his car

somewhere to make it look like Atherton went somewhere and no one knows where he went to or when he's coming back."

"Yeah," I said. "So now we have two actual killings and two suspected killings."

"That's right," Ruth confirmed.

"And another thing we'll need to do is find out what's going on that'll explain everything that's happened."

"Of course."

"Yeah," Tom agreed. "What I've done after Del called me and told me what the two of you are looking into, and that you were going to come here to Vegas to continue your investigations, and before the both of you came here to Vegas to continue your investigations, was have my operatives here in Vegas find out who knows Ramsey and find out from that person what he knows about Ramsey and why. Maybe that'll help."

"Maybe it will," I said.

"Yeah," Ruth said.

"But we didn't make it a secret about who was finding out who knows Ramsey and find out from that person what he knows about Ramsey and why. We said that the Del Gaunt Detective Agency and Patrol Insurance were finding out who knows Ramsey and find out what that person can tell us about Ramsey and why. Maybe this'll help."

"Maybe it will," I said.

"Yeah," Ruth said.

"But we could continue your investigations tomorrow," Tom continued. "What the two of you could do today is get your rental cars and get situated and rest up and recuperate from your trip coming over here. You probably would like to sleep off the jet lag. Then tomorrow, you could meet at my office, and then we can work out our next plan of action. And then, of course, we carry out the plan of action."

"Of course," I said. "Yeah. I think that would be a good idea on what to do today and what to do tomorrow."

"Yeah. I agree," Ruth said.

"All right," Tom said. "It's settled: today you two collect your rental cars and get situated and rest up and recuperate from your trip coming over here, and then tomorrow, we meet at my office and work our next plan of action. And then, we carry out the plan."

Our lunches came. Then we dug right into them: all three of us were having Carne Asada and washing it down with Pepsi.

The three of us didn't talk about Ruth's investigation and mine while Ruth and Tom and I had lunch. Instead, the three of us talked about other things, things that people like to talk about.

CHAPTER VII

The next day, Ruth, Tom, and I were here at Del Gaunt's office here in Vegas. Yesterday, after we had had lunch, Ruth had called Del and had told him that she and I had met Tom and what the three of us had talked about when we had met, and then Del had told Ruth that nothing was happening in Bellingham right now, things were still the same as before, and *I* had called John and had told him that Ruth and I had met Tom and what the three of us had talked about after we had met, and then John had told me that nothing was going on in Bellingham right now, that things were still the same as before, and after Ruth had talked to Del, and after I had talked to John, Ruth and I had told Tom what Ruth and Del

had talked about, and what John and *I* had talked about. Then Tom had taken Ruth and me to the car rental agency, and then Ruth and I had gotten our rental cars, and then Tom had told us where in Vegas Del Gaunt's Vegas office was and how to get there. Then Tom and Ruth and I had agreed on when today we meet at Del Gaunt's Vegas office so we talk about our next plan of action. Then Ruth and I had asked the girl at the car rental agency where here in Vegas the hotel that Ruth was going to stay at was and how to get there, and the girl at the car rental agency told her where the hotel was and how to get there, and then *I* asked the girl at the car rental agency where here in Vegas the hotel *I* was going to stay at was and how to get there, and she told me where that hotel was and how to get there. After that, Tom had gone back to Del Gaunt's office here in Vegas, and Ruth had gotten into *her* rented car and had gone to *her* hotel and had slept off the jet lag, and *I* had gotten

into *my* rented car and had gone to *my* hotel and had slept off the jet lag. Now Tom and Ruth and I were here inside the conference room of Del Gaunt's office here in Vegas. We had already worked out our next plan of action. Now we were doing one of the things in the plan of action: discussing the background check we had run on Ramsey, and discussing the background check we had run on Drury.

We were looking at the information on the background check we had run on Ramsey now.

"As you can see," I said. "the information on him only goes back six years. After that there's nothing. There's no information on him before those six years."

"Yeah," Ruth said. Then she showed Tom and me the background information on Drury. "And here's the information on Drury. There's information on him going back passed the last six years. It goes all the way up to when he was born."

"Yeah," Tom said. "When means that Drury must be a real person."

"Yeah," *I* said. "There is that possibility. But as for Ramsey, he must be an entirely different thing. If there's no information on him before the past six years, then that would mean that he's either a mystery man, or, the information on him was faked. One of the two."

"Yeah," Ruth said. "And if the information on him *was* faked, then maybe his name was faked, too. Eli Ramsey is not his real name. And right now he's in Bellingham under an assumed name. No one knows he's in Bellingham. Whoever he is."

"Yeah," Tom said. "And we've run a check on his name to see if it *is* faked nor not. But we haven't found any evidence that says his name's faked or not."

"Yeah," *I* said. "And we've run a check on his face to see what name goes with the face, too. We didn't find a name that goes with

the face. So it looks like the name Eli Ramsey is faked."

"Yeah," Tom said. "But what about his face? If we haven't found a name that goes with the face, then that would mean the face isn't real. Either it's a mask, or he had plastic surgery done on his face."

I thought about that. Then I spoke: "Either theory is possible."

"Yeah," Ruth said. "And if this man had a mask of Ramsey made for him, or if his face were changed by plastic surgery so he could look like Ramsey, then maybe he was taken to Bellingham after he had donned the mask of Ramsey or after his face had been changed by plastic surgery to look like Ramsey."

I thought about that. Then I spoke: "Yeah. It would be one or the other."

"Yeah," Tom said.

"Yeah," Ruth said.

"Well, then if this man donned the mask of Ramsey, or he had his face changed by plastic surgery to look like Ramsey, then why

was Drury freed from going to prison, and where he is now, and what's he doing there, or what will he do when gets there?"

"Those are interesting questions," Ruth said.

"Yes, they are."

"Well, then if this man had a mask of Ramsey made for him, or if he had his face changed by plastic surgery," Tom theorized. "then that would mean that there must be a facility here in Vegas that makes masks or has people's faces changed by plastic surgery. Or both. And such a facility would or could be in a place where no one would or could see their making the masks or performing the plastic surgery or both."

"My guess is that such a facility would or could be somewhere away from town where no one would or could see what they're doing," *I* said.

"Of course," Ruth realized. "If such a facility *were* in town, the people there would or could see what's going on."

"Well, then if the facility is somewhere away from town," Tom said. "then that would mean that perhaps the facility is somewhere in the desert. That would or could be a good place for them to conduct their operation at without anyone noticing what they're doing."

"Of course," *I* said.

"It so happens that there *is* a facility out in the desert. Just forty miles east from here. It's a hospital for plastic surgery patients. It's been in business for a long time. Maybe that's the facility they're using to conduct their operation in."

"Well, we'll have to find out."

"Of course."

"What's the name of this hospital?"

"It's called the Hospital for Plastic Surgery."

"Let's see what we can find out about it."

Then Tom and Ruth and I went to the computer and got on it to find out what we can about the Hospital for Plastic Surgery.

It had been in business for a long time. For years. Good reputation. We also noticed that the hospital *was* out in the desert. Far from civilization.

"Sneaking into it to find out what we need to find out about it would be difficult," I pointed out to Ruth and Tom. "The people who work there would see us coming from miles around."

"Of course," Tom said. "Because of this, we're going to have to find some other way of getting in there and finding out what we need to know."

"Yeah."

"Yeah," Ruth confirmed.

Tom's cell phone rang. He took it out of his pocket and said hello. "Oh, really," he then said. "All right. You can call it a day...Thank you." Then Tom hung up and put his cell phone back into his pocket. Then he spoke to Ruth and me: "That was one of my operatives who I had find out who knows Ramsey and find out from that person what

he knows about Ramsey and why: he told me that he and the other operatives found out that no one knows Ramsey. It's like Ramsey's never lived here in Vegas before, and it's like he's never been here to Vegas before."

CHAPTER VIII

"Well, that's interesting," I said.

"Yes, it is," Tom said.

"Yet the information on him says he's lived here in Vegas for a long time."

"Which means that the information on him must be faked," Ruth said. "To make it look like he's lived here in Vegas most of his life when all the time he was living somewhere else."

"Exactly," Tom said.

"Yeah," I said. "But where did he come from? And why is he in Bellingham? Well, maybe the answer's there at the hospital. It would explain one thing: if this person, whoever it he is, went to the hospital and got and donned his mask of Eli Ramsey, or had his face changed by plastic surgery to look

like Eli Ramsey, then maybe Ben Able flew into the hospital and got the person after that person donned this mask of Eli Ramsey, or after he had his face changed by plastic surgery to look like Ramsey, and then Ben Able flew the person who's impersonating Ramsey out of the hospital and over to Bellingham."

"Yeah," Tom said. Makes sense. He can land his helicopter inside the hospital. The ground inside the hospital is big enough for him to land his helicopter in."

"Yeah," Ruth said. "Something just occurred to me: what if Drury had been taken to the hospital for the same reason the man who looks like Ramsey was taken to?"

"To have *his* face changed by plastic surgery or wear a mask of someone else?" I asked.

"Yes," Ruth confirmed. "It would explain his disappearance here in Vegas. Whoever it was that freed him from the bus taking him to prison may have taken *him* to the hospital

there, and then the plastic surgeons there may have operated on his face or made a mask of someone else so Drury can use that mask. And then Ben Able came and got him after Drury had the plastic surgery had been done on his face or after the plastic surgeons made the mask for him and now he's wearing the mask."

"Yeah," Tom confirmed. "Makes sense."

"Yes, it does," *I* confirmed.

"But if that's the case, then where has Drury gone to and what's he going to do there after he gets there?"

"I don't know," *I* said. "But as I said: the answer may be there at the hospital. And we've got to find out if it *is* at the hospital or not."

Then Tom and Ruth and I started thinking of how we could find out if the answer were there at the hospital or not.

It was lunch time now, and so Tom and Ruth and I left Del Gaunt's office and went somewhere to have lunch. And then, after

lunch, Tom was going to go home and get some sleep, and Ruth was going to go to her hotel and get some sleep, and *I* was going to go to *my* hotel and get some sleep. Because tonight, while it was going to be nice and dark out, some of Del Gaunt's operatives here in Vegas were going to sneak into Ben Able's place and search it and bug it and tap the landline phone there, and some more of Del Gaunt's operatives here in Vegas were going to be at the Del Gaunt office here in and use their computer to get into Ben Able's computer at work to find out what they can about Able's taking the man who was impersonating Ramsey to Bellingham. Maybe there was a record of it there. Or maybe there wasn't. And Tom and Ruth and I were going to sneak into Able's place of business and search it and bug it and tap the landline phone there. And then, tomorrow morning, all of us were going to meet at the office and compare notes and resume

coming up with a way to find out if the answer were there at the hospital or not.

Maggiano's Italian Catering & Restaurant was on Las Vegas Blvd.

Tom, Ruth, and I were here at Maggiano's now. Having spaghetti Marinara and washing it down with a fine red wine.

We felt better after we had eaten. Now we had coffee. Then Tom paid the check, and then he and Ruth and I left Maggiano's, and then Tom went home and set the alarm clock for a time he wanted to get up at tonight and went to bed, and Ruth went back to her hotel and set the alarm clock for a time *she* wanted to get up at tonight and removed her make-up and went to bed, and *I* went to *my* hotel and set the alarm clock for a time *I* wanted to get up at tonight and went to bed.

The other Del Gaunt operatives had lunch and went home and set *their* alarm clocks for times *they* wanted to get up at tonight, and then *they* went to bed.

They were up and had dinner now. And then they got into the clothes they were going to wear so they could sneak into Ben Able's place and search it and bug and tap the landline phone there. Then they went over to Able's place and snuck into it and searched it and bugged it and tapped the landline phone here while Able was still at work. They had found out when Able went to work and when he got off work.

They were driving away from Able's place now. They had snuck into it and had searched it and had bugged it and had tapped the landline phone. Now they were going home so they could turn in. Tomorrow, they were going to meet with the rest of us at the office and then all of us were going compare notes and resume coming up with a way to find out if the answer were there at the hospital or not.

"That has to be! It couldn't be anything else!"

The words were pounding in my brain after I had woken up from the sleep I had got and after I had ordered coffee from room service and while I waited for the coffee to come so I can have some while I get ready to go to have dinner with Ruth and Tom tonight, and then, after dinner, Ruth and Tom and I go over to Able's place of business and search it and bug and tap the landline phone there.

The man pretending to be Ramsey and Drury were the same person: Drury was impersonating Ramsey. Drury was the one who was wearing the mask of Ramsey, or, Drury had had his face changed by plastic surgery to look like Ramsey. And then Drury had been sent to Bellingham to do whatever it was he was going to do in Bellingham, or, whatever he was doing in Bellingham now. It would explain Drury's disappearance in Vegas, and Ramsey's appearance in Bellingham. And no one in Bellingham, except the people who had kept Nadine

Fuller from finding out about Ramsey and had killed Beverly to keep her from finding out why Nadine Fuller had been fired from her job, and probably the people here in Vegas who were in on that operation--whatever the operations was--knew Drury was in Bellingham. As for Pax, he was killed because the murderer knew that Beverly had been at home and with Pax at that time. And because of that, he had to kill Beverly *and* Pax. Because, even though the parrot wasn't able to talk, he was able to repeat what he heard. And that would be dangerous to the murderer. If Beverly had been murdered somewhere else instead of at her place, and Pax had been at home at the time Beverly had been murdered somewhere else instead of at her place, Pax would still be alive.

The coffee came, and then I signed for it and gave the waiter a nice tip, and the waiter left and I poured myself some coffee and sipped it while I got ready to have dinner

with Ruth and Tom and then do that work with them tonight.

Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak, and Stone Crab restaurant was on Las Vegas Blvd.

Tom, Ruth, and I were here at Joes now. We had already ordered dinner. Now we sipping a fine red wine.

I told Tom and Ruth about the theory I had about Drury impersonating Ramsey.

"Makes sense," Ruth said after I had finished.

"Yeah, it does," *Tom* said after I had finished. "But it still doesn't tell us why Drury is in Bellingham impersonating Ramsey. We only know that he *is* in Bellingham impersonating Ramsey and working."

"I know," I said. "And we'll still have to find out why he's in Bellingham impersonating Ramsey."

We were having dinner now. For dinner we had steak and washed it down with a fine red wine, and then we had coffee. Then *I*

paid the check this time, and then Tom, Ruth, and I left the restaurant and went over to Able's place of business to search it and bug it and tap the landline phone here.

Able's place of business was north of Vegas and just outside Vegas.

We got here in time to see Able lock up his place of business and leave. We had found out when Able goes to work and when he quits work.

After Able left, we parked our cars across the street from Able's place of business, and then we ran across the street and jimmied the lock of the door and got into his place and searched it and bugged it and tapped the landline phone here.

We were driving away from Able's place now. We had searched the place and had bugged it and had tapped the landline phone there. Now Tom was going home so he could turn in, and Ruth and I were going to our hotels so we could turn in and. Tomorrow, all three of us, and the rest of Del Gaunt's

operatives here in Vegas were going to meet at the office and compare notes.

The next day, all of us were here at Del Gaunt's office here in Vegas. Sitting around the round table here inside the conference room. I told the other operatives what my theory was for Drury impersonating Ramsey. They had the same opinion about that that Tom and Ruth had. After I told them what my theory was for Drury impersonating Ramsey was, all of us compared notes.

The operatives who had searched Able's home told Tom and Ruth and me that they had searched the place and had bugged it and tapped the landline phone there, but they had found nothing at Able's home. Which meant that Able had nothing to hide, or he had something to hide, but he was hiding it somewhere else. Then Tom and Ruth and I told the other we had searched and had bugged Able's place of business and tapped the landline phone there and what we had discovered there: nothing. Which

meant that Able had nothing to hide, or he *had* something to hide, but he was hiding it somewhere. Then the operatives who had been here at the office and had searched Able's computer at work told us they had searched Able's computer at work and had discovered nothing on it. Not even a flight plan saying Able had taken Drury to Bellingham. But that told us something: Able couldn't file a flight plan to Bellingham. He couldn't keep a record of his taking Drury to Bellingham. Because of this, he must have filed a phony flight plan. Saying he had gone somewhere else. Because he couldn't tell anyone where he had taken Drury and why he had taken Drury there.

"Well, that's something," I said. "No flight plan of Able's taking Drury to Bellingham only proves that there's something secret going on. But we don't know if it's illegal. Although we suspect that there's something illegal going on in

Bellingham because of what's been going on there."

"Of course," Ruth said.

"Yeah," Tom said. "And this morning when I reported our findings to Del, and to *your* boss, Mr. Chandler, they told us that nothing new has happened in Bellingham. Everything is the same as it was before. Nothing different."

"But, of course, that doesn't mean that nothing new will happen later."

"Of course. They're still looking for Nadine Fuller and Dave Atherton, too."

"We heard something from the people our operatives found and asked the questions about Ramsey to find out what they know about Ramsey and why," Keith Sawyer, one of the operatives who had searched and had bugged Able's home and tapped the landline phone there, said. "they said that later on, after our operatives asked them the questions about Ramsey and they answered those questions, some people

came around and told them they heard about our operatives asking them the questions about Ramsey and why our operatives were asking those questions about Ramsey and wanted to know what the people who knew what they knew about Ramsey told our operatives. Then they told the people who came around what they told us about Ramsey, and then the people who came around left."

"Really?" I wondered.

"Yeah."

"Well, then whoever it was that heard we were looking for someone who knew Ramsey and wanted to ask that person what he knew about Ramsey must be in on what's going on."

"It has to be."

"Did the people those operatives talked to about Ramsey say who these people are that came around and what they look like?"

"They told us these people didn't give them their names, but they remember what

they look like." Then Keith took his notebook out of his pocket and pointed to the paper he had written the physical descriptions of these people on. Tom and Ruth and I looked at them.

"Maybe this'll help," Tom said. "We'll see if we can find out who they are from their physical descriptions. After that we can put ourselves under twenty four hour surveillance. Maybe that'll help, too. These people may have found out who we are and may want to know why we were asking our questions about Ramsey and what we're looking into."

"Of course. They probably know that information on Ramsey would arouse curiosity and would want to keep us from finding out about it. Just like those other people must have done in Bellingham. Those people must have told the people here in Vegas what happened in Bellingham."

"Yeah. And then the people here in Vegas must have found out you and Ms Hayward

came here to Vegas to resume your investigations, and then they told the people in Bellingham this."

"Yeah."

"Yeah." Ruth agreed.

Tom, Keith, the other Del Gaunt operatives here in Vegas, and Ruth and I were looking at the picture of the building of the Interporter Transportation Company on the computer now. We had found out from the pictures of the people who had asked about our wanting to know what someone knew about Ramsey and why and what we were looking into who they were and where they worked after we had fed the computer their physical descriptions in the computer, and then we found out who else worked at Interporter and when the hours of operations of Interporter were. Now we looked at a picture of Interporter.

"Staking out that place won't do any good," Tom pointed out. "That place is out in the country. A few miles north of Vegas.

"Because of this, we're going to have to do drive by surveillance on the place."

"Yeah," I agreed. "And somehow we're going to have to sneak inside the place and search it and bug and tap the landline phones there."

"Yeah," Ruth said.

"Yeah," Tom said.

"If the people who work at Interporter are in on this operation here in Vegas," I said. "then that would mean that they're doing something special in the operation. My guess is that they're taking a person away from the hospital and to Able's helicopter service after the person gets the mask of someone else, or after his face has been changed to look like someone else, and then Able flies that person to his destination. And Interporter is a front for whatever it is they're doing in the operation. That is, if Able doesn't fly into the hospital and gets the person who's wearing the mask or had his features changed by plastic surgery."

"Yeah," Ruth said. "And those people may also be the people who rescue people from being taken to prison. They maybe doing that job as well as they transport people from the hospital to Able's helicopter and then Able flies those people to their destinations. Just like they did with Drury. That is, if Able doesn't fly into the hospital and gets the person who's wearing the mask or had his features changed by plastic surgery."

"Yeah," I agreed.

"But if they were rescuing people from being taken to prison," Tom pointed out. "They must be using rental cars as well as they wear masks to keep people from recognizing the cars as well as to keep people from recognizing the people who rescue people from being taken to prison so they won't be traced."

"Of course," Ruth said.

"We could find out if some people rented some cars a few days before Drury had been

rescued from going to prison," Tom suggested. "But there's no guarantee we'll find something."

"No, there isn't," I agreed. "The only thing that we might find is that someone did rent a car a few days before Drury was rescued from being taken to prison, but we won't know who rented the car: one of the people who works at Interporter, or someone else who's in on the operation, someone we don't know anything about, or someone who has nothing to do with the operation."

Then Tom and the other Del Gaunt operatives here in Vegas and Ruth and I started working out our next plan of action--including our resuming finding a way to find out if the answer were there at the hospital or not.

It was a good thing that Tom and his operatives and Ruth and I were using the computer to find out what we needed to know about Interporter. We didn't want to

go over to Interporter and take a look around there. If these people who had found out that we had been asking about Ramsey had found out who we were, they would have followed us and would have seen us looking at Interporter. And we couldn't have that.

CHAPTER IX

The next day, Ruth, Tom, Keith, the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives, and I were here at Del Gaunt Vegas HQ. We had worked out our new plan of action, and then we had gotten some sleep, and then we had gotten ready to carry out the plan. Then Tom, Ruth, and I had gone over to Hal Simpson's place and Deke Sorrell's place to search them. We had found out from the physical descriptions of the people who had been asking about our wanting to know who knew about Ramsey and why and what we were looking into that Simpson and Sorrell had been the ones who had been asking about our wanting to know who knew about Ramsey and why and what we were looking into. We had searched Simpson's place and

Sorrell's place and bugged them and tapped their landline and cell phones and bugged their cars and had put homing devices on their cars while it was nice and dark out, and while it was real early in the morning, and after we had noticed Simpson and Sorrell had been sleeping and after we had rendered them unconscious by having them inhale knock out drops. Then we had snuck out of their places and had called the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and had told them we had searched Simpson's places and bug them and their cell and landline phones and searched and bug their cars and put homing devices on them, and that we were going to go turn in, then meet Tom and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives at HQ later on this morning. Other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives had gone over to Interporter and had searched it and had bugged it the same time that Tom and Ruth and I had gone over to Simpson's and Sorrell's places and had searched them and had bugged them and

their cell and landline phones and had bugged their cars and had put homing devices on their cars. Now Ruth and Tom and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I were here inside the conference room of Del Gaunt Vegas and listening in on Simpson's place and his car and his cell and landline phones, and also listening in on Sorrell's place and his car and his cell and landline phones, and listening in on Interporter; we also reported the results of our searching Sorrell's place and his car and Simpson's place and *his* car and Interporter. All of these things had the same thing in common: they were clean. Which meant that Sorrell and Simpson and the other people who worked at Interporter had nothing to hide, or they *had* something to hide, but they were hiding it somewhere else. Then, we heard something. We listened. Then, we heard Simpson dial his cell phone. Then, we heard the phone on the other end ring.

"Hello?" the person on the other end said.

"Hello," Simpson said. "Deke?"

"Yeah, this is Deke."

"This is Hal, Deke."

"Hal. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"Great. Have you had breakfast yet."

"No. I haven't."

"Well, you'd better have it. It looks like we're going to have a long day ahead of us. We've got to find this Rich Chandler and this Ruth Hayward and follow them wherever they go and watch whatever they do and investigate them. It looks like they came here to Vegas to continue their investigations of what happened in Bellingham. They mustn't find out what we're doing here in Vegas. If they do, we stop them."

"Of course."

"After we found out about Chandler and Hayward, I called Brent and told *him* what we found out about Chandler and Hayward, and then he called Liam Winslow and Wayde Cambridge and told them what we found out about Chandler and Hayward, and then Brent called me back and told me that he and Liam and Wayde agreed that we should find out if Chandler and Hayward will find out what we're doing here in Vegas, and if we *do* find out that *they* find out about what we're doing here in Vegas, we stop them. We'll have more people relieve us on finding, following, watching, and investigating Chandler and Hayward when we get tired, of course, but right now, you and I have got to find, follow, watch, and investigate Chandler and Hayward."

"Of course. Does Eli Ramsey know what we're doing right now?"

"No, he doesn't. Liam and Wayde haven't told him about what we're doing. They and Brent have decided that he shouldn't know

about what we're doing because of what the police in Bellingham and the Del Gaunt operatives in Bellingham and Patrol Insurance are investigating in Bellingham, and what the Del Gaunt operatives here in Vegas and Ruth Hayward and Rich Chandler are looking into here in Vegas. We and Eli Ramsey mustn't be seen or heard talking to each other. If we are, the authorities and Del Gaunt and Patrol Insurance will look into it and possibly find out what we're doing and what Eli Ramsey's involvement in what we're doing is. And we can't have this."

"So in other words, Eli Ramsey is on his own. We can't help them."

"That's right."

"That's too bad."

"Yes, it is. But if all goes well, the police in Bellingham, and the Del Gaunt operatives in Bellingham, and Patrol Insurance, won't find out what's going on in Bellingham, and the Del Gaunt operatives here in Vegas, and Ruth Hayward, and Rich Chandler, won't

find out what's going on here in Vegas. And then, that'll be the end of it. There'll be no more investigation of what we're doing. We can continue doing what we're doing without interference from the Del Gaunt Detective Agency and Patrol Insurance and the police."

"Of course. O.K. I'll get some breakfast."

"Good. I'll get some breakfast, too. Then I'll find, follow, watch, and investigate Chandler. And after you've had *your* breakfast, you find, follow, watch, and investigate Hayward with me."

"I'll do that. Anything else, Hal?"

"No. That's it. Bye, Deke."

"Bye, Hal," Then Sorrell hung up.

So did Simpson.

"Brent must be Brent Higgins, the owner and manager of Interporter." I said.

Tom got on the computer to find this out. He found out that Brent *was* Brent Higgins, the owner and manager of

Interporter and nodded at me. Then he turned the computer off.

"So that has to be it," I said. "Brent Higgins and Hal Simpson and Deke Sorrell, and other people who work at Interporter, are agents of an operation that's protecting whatever it is that's going on here in Vegas. That would explain Simpson telling Sorrell that they have to find out if we find out what's going on here in Vegas and they keep us from finding out what's going here in Vegas."

"Yeah," Ruth agreed.

"Yeah," Tom agreed.

"Yeah," Keith agreed.

The other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives said, "Yeah," too.

"And Interporter must be the front for this protection operation for whatever it is that's going on here in Vegas," I continued.

Everyone else agreed to that.

"And Brent Higgins must be the head of this protection operation for whatever it is

that's going on here in Vegas if he's the owner and manager of Interporter," I went on.

Everyone else agreed to that, too.

"But there is the hospital," Tom pointed out. "We haven't searched that yet."

"But we will."

A few days later, Keith and some other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I were going over to the Hospital for Plastic Surgery. As employees for a gas company here in Vegas. With orders saying that we had to inspect the hospital for a possible gas leak. Ruth and Tom and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives were at Del Gaunt Vegas HQ. Tom was controlling the investigations from HQ. Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I had managed to obtain what we needed from the gas company to do what we had to do. They had been nice enough to help us. Del Gaunt's office here in Vegas had done business with this gas

company before. And when we had gone over to the gas company to get the equipment we were going to need to use in our investigation at the Hospital for Plastic Surgery, and while we had gone over to the hospital from the gas company to conduct our investigation at the hospital, we had made sure that Sorrell and Simpson didn't follow us and watch what we were doing and investigate what we were doing. Now Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I reached the Hospital for Plastic Surgery and pulled into the parking lot and parked the truck here inside the parking lot. Then we went into the hospital and told the young woman at the desk in the lobby we were from the gas company and that we had orders to inspect the building to see if there were a possible gas leak and showed her the orders. Then she got on the phone and called the administrator and told him what we had told the woman. After that, the woman replaced the receiver of her phone

and told us we could go ahead and inspect the building. Then Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I split up and went in different directions to "search for the possible gas leak."

I came to an elevator. Then I went into it and the door closed and I noticed I was the only one in the elevator. That would help. No one except Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives would know where I was going to and why I was going there. I inspected the control panel. I noticed there was a button for the basement. I decided to start *my* part of the search in the basement. It would be the likely place for a secret or illegal operation. I pressed the basement button. Then the elevator brought me down to the basement. Then I got out of the elevator and stood inside the room and looked all around the room. Nothing unusual inside *this* room. Either there was nothing unusual inside *this* room, or there *was* something unusual inside this room,

and it was hidden inside this room. I walked through the room and continued looking all around me. Everything looked the same as it did when I had come into the room. Then, I came to another elevator. I looked at the control panel on the wall. Nothing unusual about that. Just a button that closed the door of the elevator, and a button that opened the door of the elevator. I pressed the button that opened the door of the elevator, and then the door of the elevator opened. Then I looked inside. Nothing. No one was here. Then I stepped into the elevator, and then the elevator door closed. After that I looked at the control panel on the wall. There were only two buttons on the walls. But the panel didn't say what these buttons operated. Out of curiosity, I pressed one of the buttons. Nothing happened. The elevator didn't move. Which meant that maybe this button was intended to make the elevator go up to this floor. Then, out of curiosity, I pressed the other button--and

then it happened--the elevator went down. Then it stopped. Then the doors of the elevator opened. Then I got out of the elevator and stood inside the room. Then I looked all around me. Then I walked through the room and continued looking all around me. Then, I stopped suddenly. Then, my gaze became fixed. Then, quickly, I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed everything I saw inside this room. Then, quickly, I put my camera back into my pocket and took my digital recorder out of my pocket and recorded everything I saw inside this room.

CHAPTER X

I was taking the elevator back up to the lobby of the hospital now. I had finished my inspection of the floor of the hospital below the basement of the hospital. Now I reached the lobby, and then the elevator doors opened, and then I stepped out of the elevator. Then I saw Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives walking down the hall. They saw me and I joined them. They told me they had finished looking around.

"So have I," I told them. Then I whispered to all of them: "But let's talk about what we found after we get back to HQ. I don't want our conversations about our investigations to be overheard."

"I understand," Keith whispered, too.

Then Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and I left the hospital as quietly as we had entered it: we stopped off at the desk in the lobby and told the same young woman we had talked to when we had come in that "we had finished our inspection of the hospital and we hadn't found any gas leaks." Then the woman smiled. After that, we left. Then we left the hospital and took indirect routes back to the gas company to make sure that Sorrell and Simpson wouldn't find, follow, and investigate us. Right now we had to return the equipment we had used to conduct our investigation inside the hospital, then go back to Del Gaunt Vegas HQ and compare our notes.

We reached the gas company without Sorrell or Simpson or the both of them seeing where we were going and returned the equipment we had used in our investigation of the hospital. Then we got into Keith's white Sorento and went back to Del Gaunt Vegas HQ. Along the way, we

checked to see if Sorrell or Simpson or the both of them were following and watching and investigating us. They weren't. That was good. But just the same, we took indirect routes back to Del Gaunt Vegas HQ from the gas company to make sure that Sorrell or Simpson or both of them wouldn't find, follow, see what we were doing, and investigate us.

We were here at Del Gaunt Vegas HQ now. We had told Ruth and Tom and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives what we had done at the hospital and what *I* had discovered on the floor of the hospital below the basement of the hospital and gave Tom my camera and told him to print and blow up the photos in my camera developed, and then Keith volunteered to do it, and then Tom gave Keith the camera. Keith was tall, stringy, had light brown hair, a thick matching mustache that split his handsome, stern features in two, light green eyes, and

he was wearing a white T-shirt and light green jeans and white tennis shoes.

Here inside the conference room of Del Gaunt Vegas, the rest of us were sitting around the table and listening to the recording of what I had discovered inside the room in the hospital below the basement in the hospital while Keith was developing the film in my camera. Then we finished listening to the recording, and then I turned my digital recorder off.

"So it looks like they have the equipment to change the papers for someone's new identity," Tom deduced.

"Yeah," I agreed. "They change the papers of the person's new ID as well as they change the person's face."

"An identity change operation," Ruth said.

"That's right," *I* said. "And they must do this to people who are on the run or escape from prison or jail, or they're on their way to jail or prison, and then these people appear

and free the person from being taken to prison or jail or who have escaped from prison or jail, or they're on the run, and take them to the hospital, and then the plastic surgeons change their faces with plastic surgery, and the other people change their identity papers to go with their new faces. Then those people are taken from the hospital to their new destinations where they do what they want to do there, or, they're supposed to do something else there. My guess is that the people who are in on the operation for protecting this identity change operation also free the fugitives and take them to the hospital for the identity change operation and then take them to Ben Able for Able to take the fugitives to their new destinations after the fugitives have had their faces and papers changed to be someone else. That is, if Ben Able doesn't fly into the hospital and gets the person who's had his features and papers changed."

"Of course. But what would these fugitives have to do for money?" Ruth asked. "They would have to have enough money to help them get started in their new destinations."

"Of course," I said. "My guess is that someone in the new place they're living in gives them enough money to get started with. Probably someone who is in the business of giving someone money. Like a loan officer or a financier or a gambler. Or maybe that person gave the money to Winslow or Cambridge and one of them gave the fugitive the money. Or maybe, after that person got the money for the fugitive, he opened up a bank account for that fugitive and gave the fugitive the bank book or that person gave the bank book to Winslow or Cambridge and then Winslow or Cambridge gave the fugitive the bank book."

"Of course," Ruth said. "And maybe the fugitive heard about this identity change operation and got a hold of the people who

carry out the operation and told them he wanted to escape the law and change his identity."

"Yeah," *I* said.

"And maybe Drury heard about this operation and got a hold of the people who carry out the operation and told them he wanted to escape the law and have his identity changed," Tom realized.

"Yeah."

"And so now Drury's in Bellingham hiding under a new face and a new name."

"Yeah. And no one except the other people in Bellingham who are in on this identity change operation knows that there's a murderer at large in Bellingham."

"Yeah," Tom said.

"Yeah," Ruth said.

"Yeah," *I* said. "And Beverly Nether could have found out about this identity change operation if she hadn't been killed. And Nadine Fuller and Dave Atherton could have found out about this identity change

operation if they hadn't been kidnapped and killed--and my guess is that they had to have been kidnapped and killed. It would explain why no one has seen or heard from them and why their cars aren't around."

"Yeah," Tom agreed. "You also mention in your recording an incinerator inside the same room the identity change operation is in."

"Yes, I did," I confirmed. "My guess is that they use that incinerator to destroy anything left over from their conducting the identity change operation so it won't be discovered. And my guess is that they also use the incinerator to destroy the file on the person who gets his new identity so it won't be discovered and the file on the person who gets his new face that the plastic surgeons created when they changed the person's face with plastic surgery so *that* won't be discovered. They can't leave behind any evidence of the operation."

"Of course," Ruth said. "And they must have used the incinerator to destroy all of these things after they conducted the identity change operation on Drury."

"Yeah," I said.

"I'm going to call your boss and Del and tell him everything we've discovered so far and find out what's going on in Bellingham," Tom told Ruth and me. Then he went to the landline phone on a table against the wall and made those calls.

Keith came into the room and gave us the pictures he had blown up and gave me back my camera, and then we looked at the pictures; we also told him what we had talked about having to do with the recording of what I had discovered in the room in the Hospital for Plastic Surgery below the basement in the Hospital for Plastic Surgery that we had heard and that Tom was calling Del and John to tell them what we had discovered here in Vegas so far and to find

out from Del and John what was going on in Bellingham.

Tom finished talking to Del and John, and then he replaced the receiver of his phone and turned and faced us and spoke to us: "I just finished talking to Del and John Thatcher. I just finished telling them what we did here in Vegas so far and what we discovered here in Vegas so far, and they told us nothing new in Bellingham has happened. Everything there is the same as it was before. Del and Mr. Thatcher also told us that they're going to tell the police what we found out about Beverly Nether's murder and the murder of her parrot, Pax, so far, and see about having the police help them find Nadine Fuller and Dave Atherton and their cars, and continue doing everything else that *they're* doing in the investigation, and we tell the police here in Vegas what *we're* doing in the investigation and what *we've* discovered in the investigation so far

and we continue doing everything else that
we're doing in the investigation.

CHAPTER XI

Later the same day, Ruth, Tom, and I were here at Las Vegas police headquarters. Tom had called Lieutenant Al Reynolds of the detective unit of the Vegas police department and told him we needed to talk to him about what we were looking into and what we had discovered so far. Then we had made an appointment for us to tell Al what we were looking into and what we had discovered so far. Now we were here inside Al's office and sitting in front of Al's big mahogany desk while Al himself was sitting behind his desk. Ruth, Tom, and I told Al what we were looking into and what we had discovered so far and had Al listen to the recording of what I had discovered inside the room below the basement of the

Hospital for Plastic Surgery and showed him the photographs of everything that was inside that room and also had Al listen to the recordings of the other things I had discovered in our investigation.

"Well, it would explain why Drury disappeared here in Vegas," Al said after we had finished telling him what we were looking into and what we had discovered so far and after Al had listened to all of the recordings we had played for him to listen to and after Al had seen the photographs of the identity change operation in the room below the basement of the Hospital for Plastic Surgery.

"Yes, it would," I confirmed. "And it would also explain Drury's reappearance in Bellingham."

"Yes. It would."

Then Tom told Al what John and Del wanted Tom and his operatives here in Vegas and Ruth and me to do here in Vegas,

and what John and Del and the police in Bellingham were going to do.

Al nodded after Tom had finished. "Well, I think one of the things we should do here in Vegas is go over to the Hospital for Plastic Surgery and show the people there these pictures," Al said. "It'd be interesting to see their reactions to these pictures. Then we take it from there on what to do."

Dr. Jordan Holmes, the director of the Hospital for Plastic Surgery, was here at his office here at the Hospital for Plastic Surgery. He was sitting behind his desk and doing some paperwork.

The phone on his desk rang. He picked up the receiver and said, "Yes?"

"The police are here," said Sue Renart, Holmes's secretary.

"The police?" Holmes wondered.

"Yes."

"Send them in." Then Holmes replaced the receiver of his phone.

The door to Holmes's office opened, and in walked Tom, Ruth, Al, and me.

Al was big, tall, gray, and he was wearing a brown suit and a white shirt and a red tie and black leather shoes.

He took his police badge and ID out of his pocket and showed them to Holmes and told Holmes who he was and introduced Holmes to Ruth and Tom and me. Then he told Holmes what Ruth and Tom and I were looking into and what we had discovered so far and showed Holmes the pictures of what I had discovered in the room the identity change operation was in and played the recording what I had discovered in that room and played the recordings of the other things I had discovered in the course of the investigation.

Holmes looked shocked after Al had finished.

"Got anything to say about this, Dr. Holmes?" Al asked.

Holmes was speechless.

"I guess not," Al said. "We're taking you downtown for questioning."

We were here at police headquarters now. Inside an interrogation room and asking Holmes some questions. He answered all of our questions, and we wrote down the information we needed, and Holmes also told us that he and the other people who were in on the identity change operation had the fugitives who had their names and faces changed do favors for them, which was their fee for conducting the identity change operation. Then Al had one of his men take Holmes down to Booking and have him booked and jailed. That man took Holmes away. Holmes was tall, thin, had brown hair, hazel eyes, the face of a horse, and he was wearing a brown suit and a green shirt and a red and black stripe tie and black leather shoes.

"Well," Al said. "Now we know what we needed to know."

"Yes, we do," *I* said.

"I'll call the police department in Bellingham and tell them what we found out here in Vegas and find out from them what's going on in Bellingham and that we'll work out and execute our next plan of action, and you, Mr. Chandler, will call your boss and tell him what we found out here in Vegas and that we'll work out and execute our next plan of action, and you, Tom, will call Del and tell him what we found out here in Vegas and that we'll work out and execute our next plan of action."

Then Ruth and Tom and Al and I went to Al's office so Tom and I could make those phone calls.

We were here inside Al's office now. Sitting around Al's desk and making those phone calls. After we made them, Tom put his cell phone back into his pocket, and *I* put *my* cell phone back into my pocket, and then Tom told us he had told Del what we had discovered here in Vegas, and Del had told Tom that everything in Bellingham was the

same as before. They hadn't even found Nadine Fuller and Dave Atherton and their cars, but they're still looking for them, and *I* told them that *my* phone conversation with John was the same as the phone conversation Tom had had with Del. Then we started talking about how we were going to execute our next plan of action. The only thing here in Vegas that was left to be done was arrest the people here in Vegas who were in on the identity change operation. And the only thing in Bellingham that was left to be done was close down the Alchemy Corps and arrest the people in Bellingham who were in on the identity change operation and take David Atherton's body and Nadine Fuller's body and David's car and Nadine's car to police headquarters and examine them. Holmes had told us who here in Vegas was in on the identity change operation, and who in Bellingham was in on the identity change operation, and where in Bellingham Nadine's body and David's body

and David's car and Nadine's car were. Holmes had told us that the people who had killed David and Nadine kidnapped and killed David and Nadine and drove and parked David's car and Nadine's car in the same place they had buried David's body and Nadine's body in. These people who had kidnapped and killed David and Nadine and put their cars in the same place they had buried David's body and Nadine's body were members of the "security team" of the identity change operation that was conducted in Bellingham, where the fugitives who had had their names and faces changed went to to live there after they had had their names and faces changed. It was the "security team's" responsibility to protect the part of the identity change operation that was going on in Bellingham. They had found out that Nadine had gotten interested in "Eli Ramsey" and was getting close to finding out what she wanted to know about him. And so they had killed her to keep her

from finding out anymore about "Eli Ramsey." And then they had put Nadine's body and her car in a place where they would never be found, or, where they wouldn't be found for quite a while, and the "security team" had also been the ones who had found out that Beverly Nether had hired David Atherton to find out why Nadine Fuller had been fired from her job and had killed him to keep him from finding out why she had been fired. And then they had put David's body and his car in a place where they would never be found, or, they wouldn't be found for quite a while. And it was the same "security team" that had killed Beverly Nether when she had started trying to find out why Nadine Fuller had been fired. And it was the same "security team" that had killed Pax because Pax had been with Beverly Nether when they had killed her.

Holmes had also told us the names and addresses of the members of this "security team," that was protecting the part of the

identity change operation that was providing the fugitives who had had their names and faces changed and who had gone to Bellingham to resume their lives there with the things that the fugitives were going to need to live in Bellingham: money, cars, jobs, and homes.

CHAPTER XII

Back here in Bellingham, some of the police closed down the Alchemy Corps, and the rest of the police and Del Gaunt and his men and John and his men followed and watched the people here in Bellingham who were in on the identity change operation until they could arrest the people here in Bellingham who were in on the identity change operation. They had to keep them in their sights until they could arrest them.

Some of those police officers went to arrest the members of the "security team," here in Bellingham, but some of the members of that team tried to escape so they wouldn't be arrested. They failed. They were killed in the course of the police officers' arresting the members of the "security

team." The police officers did arrest the other members of the team who didn't escape.

Bank U.S.A. was here in Bellingham. On Holly Street.

Walt Fenton, loan officer for Bank U.S.A., was here at the bank now. He was sitting behind his desk and doing some paperwork. He was also one of the people who was in on the identity change operation here in Bellingham. His job was to provide the fugitives who had had their names and faces changed and had come here to Bellingham with money to help them get started.

Policemen came into the bank and walked over to Walt and told them who they were and showed him their ID's and the warrant for his arrest. Then they told him what they were going to arrest him for and what they and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Walt looked shocked after they had finished.

Then the policemen told Walt to stand up and he did, and then one of the police officers handcuffed him and read him his rights while and they and the rest of the police officers left the bank and took Fenton with them so they could take Fenton over to police headquarters. Fenton was tall, lean, had shineless looking black hair, dark green eyes, wormlike features, and he was wearing a black suit and a white shirt and a red and white stripe tie and black leather shoes.

Cambridge Motors was on Northwest Avenue.

Cambridge was here inside his office and talking to someone on the phone right now. Cambridge was also another person here in Bellingham who was in on the identity change operation as well as he was in the business of manufacturing cars. His job in the identity change operation was to provide the fugitives who had had their names and

faces changed and had come here to Bellingham with cars after they reach their destinations so the fugitives would be able to go to wherever it was the fugitives wanted to go to.

When Cambridge saw some people come into his office, he told the person he was talking to on the phone that he'll have to call him back. Then he hung up. Then one of the people who had come into the room took his police badge and ID out of his pocket and showed them to Cambridge and told Cambridge who he was and told him that the rest of the people with him were police officers. Then he took the warrant out of his pocket and gave it to Cambridge and told him what it was: a warrant for Cambridge's arrest. Then the police officer told Cambridge what he was arresting Cambridge for and what they and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Cambridge looked shocked the police officer had finished.

Then another police officer pulled Cambridge up from his chair and handcuffed Cambridge, and then the police officer who had showed Cambridge the warrant read him his rights, and then they and the rest of the police officers and Cambridge walked out of the building so they could leave the plant and take Cambridge over to police headquarters. Cambridge was tall, broad shouldered, had graying brown hair, blue eyes, wolflike features, and he was wearing a burgundy suit and a white shirt and a black tie and black leather shoes.

Liam Winslow's office was here on Harris Street.

He was here inside his office now. Talking to someone on the phone and looking at some papers. He was another person who was in on the identity change operation as well as he was a licensed real estate agent. His job was to provide the

fugitives who had had their names and faces changed and had come here to Bellingham with new places.

Winslow finished talking to the person on the other end of the phone, and then they hung up, and then Winslow continued looking at the papers that he and the other person he had talked to on the phone about. Then Winslow heard some footsteps and looked up from the papers. Then he smiled at the people who had just come into the room. "Can I help you?" he asked them.

Standing inside Winslow's office and in front of his desk were five men. One of them took his police ID and badge out of his pocket and showed them to Winslow and introduced himself and the other three policemen to Winslow. The fifth man was Burt Taylor. From Patrol Insurance. Investigations Division. He was tall, thin, pale, had slick looking black hair, green eyes, a beak for a nose, a slit for a mouth, and he was wearing a gray tweed coat and a white

shirt and a burgundy tie and dark charcoal gray pants and black leather shoes.

The police officer who had introduced himself and the other three police officers and Burt to Winslow put his ID and badge back into his pocket and took the warrant out of his pocket and showed it to Winslow and told him the warrant was for his arrest. Then the policeman told Winslow what he and the rest of the policemen were arresting him for, and what they and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Winslow looked shocked after the policeman had finished.

Then another one of the policemen pulled Winslow out of his chair and handcuffed him and read him his rights, and then they and the rest of the policemen and Burt left Winslow's office so all of the policemen could take Winslow over to police headquarters. Winslow wasn't very tall, had a flat build, salt and pepper hair, brown eyes,

a triangular face, and he was wearing a navy blue suit and a light blue shirt and a navy blue and white tie and black leather shoes.

The Nether Corporation was on Bakerview Road.

Nancy Purdue was here at the Nether Corporation now. Walking back into her office and sipping another cup of coffee she had gotten from out in the reception room of the Human Resources Division of the Nether Corporation. Nancy was the manager of the Human Resources Division of the Nether Corporation. She was tall, plump, had long, thick black hair, dark blue eyes, a creamy pallor complexion, small burgundy lips, and she was wearing a gray waistlength coat and a matching tight fitting skirt and flesh tone stockings and shiny dark charcoal high heel shoes.

Nancy was also another person here in Bellingham who was in on the identity change operation. It was her job to provide the people who had had their names and

faces changed and had come here to Bellingham with jobs.

Nancy reached her desk to get behind it and continue some paperwork when some people came into the room. She looked to where she heard them come in.

Those people who had come into the room were three men and Marla. Marla wasn't very tall, plump, had long brown hair, brown eyes, a creamy pallor complexion, high cheekbones, a thin beige upper lip, a thick beige lower lip, and she was wearing a brown corduroy coat and a red and white checkerboard blouse and blue jeans and white tennis shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shineless brown shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

One of the men took his police ID and badge out of his pocket and introduced himself and the other men and Marla to Nancy. The other men were police officers. Then he put his badge and ID back into his

pocket and took the warrant out of his pocket and gave it to Nancy and told him that he and the other police officers were going to arrest her, and then he told her what he was going to arrest her for and what the police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Nancy looked shocked after the police officer had finished.

Then he walked over to Nancy and put her cup of coffee on her desk and put her hands behind her back and handcuffed her and read her her rights, and then he and Nancy and the other police officers and Marla left Nancy's office so they could leave the Nether Corporation and go to police headquarters.

"Eli Ramsey" was here at his place. He had called work and had told his boss he couldn't make it to work today because he had a head cold. Now he was sitting in the

living room and watching TV and eating chicken soup.

There was a knock on the front door. He got out of the recliner chair and went to the door to answer it. He was wearing a blue bathrobe and white pajamas with red pinstripes and tan slippers.

When he got to the door, he opened it.

Standing outside were two men.

"Eli Ramsey?" one of them asked.

"Yes," "Eli Ramsey" said. "I'm Eli Ramsey."

Then the man took his police ID and badge out of his pocket and showed them to "Eli Ramsey" and told "Ramsey" who he and the other man were, and then he put his badge and ID back into his pocket, and took he took the warrant out of his pocket and showed it to "Ramsey" and told him he and the other man were going to arrest him, and then he told "Ramsey" what he and the other man were going to arrest him for and, and what he and the other man and the rest of

the police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

"Ramsey" looked shocked after the policeman had finished. Then--quickly--"Ramsey" closed the door on the two men--and then he ran through the room so he could escape. Then, he stopped.

Del Gaunt and John were standing in the living room and holding their guns on them. They had gone around back of "Ramsey's" place and had sneaked into the back of the place to keep "Ramsey" from escaping. They and the two police officers had realized that "Ramsey" might escape and wanted to be ready for it. Del was tall, thin, had salt and pepper hair, a matching mustache splitting his tanned, bulletshaped head in two, green eyes, and he was wearing a white windbreaker and a light blue polo shirt and white jeans and white tennis shoes, and John was tall, thin, tanned, had short dark hair combed neatly away from his forehead,

hazel eyes, a swarthy face, and he was wearing a tan suit and a white shirt and a mahogany brown tie and mahogany brown shoes.

"Ramsey" put his hands up.

The two policemen came into "Ramsey's" place to arrest him.

The other policeen dug up Dave Atherton's body and Nadine Fuller's body and took them and David's car and Nadine's car to police headquarters so they could examine them while other policemen stayed at the area where the "security team" had hidden David's body and his car and Nadine's body and her car in and examined the area. The "security team," had put David's body, and Nadine's body, and their cars, deep inside a wooded area outside Bellingham after they had kidnapped and had killed David and Nadine.

CHAPTER XIII

Back here in Vegas, Ruth, the Del Gaunt Vegas operatives, the police, and I, kept the people here in Vegas who were in on the identity change operation under twenty four hour surveillance until we could arrest them. We had to keep them in our sights until we *could* arrest them.

The time came to arrest them.

Ben Able was here at work. He was sitting in his office and penning his way through some papers.

Keith and some more Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and some police officers came into Able's office and told Able who they were and that they had a warrant for his arrest and what they were going to arrest him for, and what they and the rest of the

police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Able looked shocked after they had finished. Able wasn't very tall, thin, had short cropped auburn hair, green eyes, the face of a sea gull, a thick build, and he was wearing a long sleeve black shirt and black pants and black leather shoes.

Then one of the policemen walked behind Able and pulled him up so he could handcuff him and read him his rights, and Able stood up.

Then the policeman who had handcuffed Able and had read him his rights and Able himself and the rest of the policemen and Keith and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives left Able's office so they could take Able down to police headquarters, and more policemen closed down Able's business.

More policemen found and arrested the rest of the people who worked at

Interporter. They, too, were members of the protection operation that protected the identity change operation and had been taking the people who had had their faces and names changed from the Hospital for Plastic Surgery to Able's place of business after they had gotten their names and faces changed, and then Able had taken them to their destinations.

Brent Higgins was here at Interporter. He was sitting behind his office and talking to someone on the phone. When he finished talking to that person, he hung up. Then, he stopped suddenly and looked.

Standing inside the room were Al and some more policemen.

"Can I help you?" he asked Al and the policemen.

Then Al told Higgins who he was and showed him his police ID and badge, and then he told Higgins he had a warrant for his arrest and told Higgins what he was going to arrest Higgins for and what he and the rest

of the police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Higgins looked shocked after Al had finished.

Then another police officer went behind Higgins and pulled him up so he could handcuff him and read him his rights, and then Higgins stood up.

Higgins was tall, tanned, had salt and pepper hair, blue eyes, a slightly pushed in look on his flat face, and he was wearing a forest green suit and a white shirt and a black tie.

Then Higgins and the policeman who had pulled Higgins up and had read him his rights and Al and the other policemen left so Al and the other policemen could take Higgins down to police headquarters, and more policemen closed down Interporter.

Deke Sorrell stepped out of his apartment here on the Las Vegas Strip and

locked it so he could go to his car and get into it and go find and follow Ruth.

He was tall, lean, had a dark, pale look on his potato face, and he was wearing a black suit and a white shirt, no tie, open collar, and black leather shoes. He left his apartment, and when he got to his car, he stopped and looked surprised.

Standing at his black convertible were Tom and a couple of police officers.

"Deke Sorrell?" one of the police officers asked.

"Yes," Sorrell said. "I'm Deke Sorrell."

Then the police officer took his police badge and ID out of his pocket and showed them to Sorrell and told him who he was, and then he put his badge and ID back into his pocket and took the warrant out of his pocket and showed it to Sorrell and told Sorrell he had a warrant for his arrest. Then he told Sorrell what he was arresting Sorrell for and what he and the rest of the police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt

Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Sorrell looked shocked after the police officer had finished.

Then another police officer went over to Sorrell and handcuffed him and read him his rights, and then that police officer and Sorrell and the other police officers and Tom got into cars and drove away from Sorrell's apartment so they could take Sorrell down to police headquarters.

Hal Simpson waked through his apartment here on Las Vegas Boulevard and looked at his goldplated wrist watch so he could keep track of time. Although he was in no hurry to do what he had to do. But it had to be done: find and follow me.

Simpson was tall, had a medium build, had ginger blond hair, dark blue eyes, coarse, smooth features, and he was wearing a blue suit, a white shirt, no tie, open collar, and black leather shoes.

When Simpson reached the front door of his place, he opened it and stepped out of his place and locked the door, and then he left his place so he could go to his car and get into it and find and follow me.

When he got here to his car, an orange Toyota, he saw Ruth and a couple of policemen standing against Simpson's car. Simpson stopped and looked surprised when he saw them.

"Can I help you?" he asked them.

Then the police took his police badge and ID out of his pocket and showed them to Simpson, and then he put them back into his pocket and took the warrant out of his pocket and showed it to Simpson and told Simpson he had a warrant for his arrest and what he was arresting Simpson for and what he and the rest of the police and Patrol Insurance and Del Gaunt Investigations had discovered in the identity change operation.

Simpson looked shocked after the police had finished.

Then the other policeman went over to Simpson and handcuffed him and read him his rights, and then that policeman and Simpson and the other policeman and Ruth got into cars and drove away from Simpson's apartment so they could take Simpson down to police headquarters.

More policemen and I went into the Hospital for Plastic Surgery and arrested the rest of the people who worked here at the hospital who were in on the identity change operation and confiscated all of the equipment used in the identity change operation and took them with them to police headquarters. The rest of the people who worked here at the hospital who weren't in on the identity change operation stayed here at the hospital so they could take care of the patients here, the ones who weren't fugitives undergoing the identity change operation.

Two days later, Ruth, Tom, Keith, the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives, and I

were here at Del Gaunt Vegas. We had rested up for a couple of days after the police and we had carried out *our* part in the last plan of action. We had needed to rest up. Now we were here inside the conference room of Del Gaunt Vegas and sitting around the table, and Tom talked to John and Del on the phone. After he talked to John and Del, they hung up. Then Tom told us that John and Del and the police in Bellingham had done *their* part in the last plan of action, and they had found Dave Atherton and Nadine Fuller and their cars, and that the police had examined both Dave's body and Nadine's body and had discovered that the both of them had been shot to death; the police also examined Dave's car and Nadine's car and discovered there was nothing in or on the car that could connect the cars to what had been going on. The cars were clean. Then Tom looked at me and told me that John had told him that Beverly's two sisters--Heather and Ilene Garth--had been

given their life insurance money, and the money to buy their own parrots. And already they had bought their own parrots. And both parrots looked exactly like Pax. Heather called her parrot Nax, and Ilene called *her* parrot Rax.

I smiled after Tom had finished. "Well, that's nice," I then said. Then I looked at Ruth and spoke to her: "And we have a few days before we go back to Bellingham and turn in our reports."

"Yes, we do," Ruth confirmed. "Our plane goes to Bellingham in a few days."

"That's right," *I* confirmed. Then I looked at Tom and spoke to him: "So, if there isn't anything else, Ms Hayward and I are going to execute our plans for what to do here in Vegas until we *do* go back to Bellingham and turn in our reports."

"No," Tom said. "I don't think there's anything else." Then Tom looked at the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and asked

them the same question. They said there wasn't anything else.

Then Ruth and I stood up, and then we shook hands with Tom and the other Del Gaunt Vegas operatives and said "Goodbye" to all of them, and then we ran out of the office and got into my rental car, and then we drove away from Del Gaunt Vegas and over to downtown Las Vegas to execute those plans we had for what to do here in Vegas before we go back to Bellingham and turn in our reports; gamble, and go to restaurants, and see movies, and see floor shows, and